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House of Representatives

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SENATE AND HOUSE MEMBERS BLAST EPA ADMINISTRATOR'S DEFENSE OF PESTICIDE TESTING ON CHILDREN

Call Johnson's Remarks to Employees Irresponsible and Dangerous

WASHINGTON, DC- Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Bill Nelson (D-FL) and Representatives Hilda L. Solis (D-CA) and Tim Bishop (D-NY) rebuked the Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Stephen Johnson's remarks during an "all hands" address to EPA employees suggesting that pesticide testing on children is "ethically and scientifically sound" even after the House of Representatives voted to suspend funding of the practice.

The Children's Health Environmental Exposure Research Study (CHEERS) was initiated to study dosing levels of pesticide chemicals on human infants. Sixty families were to be offered nearly \$1,000, a video camera and other gifts each over two years if they would subject their children to "high indoor pesticide use" and other chemicals commonly found in households. The study would have been comprised of two groups: a nine to twelve-month-old and under three-month-old group.

The American Federation of Government Employees responded to Johnson in a letter on behalf of its Region 8 membership admonishing the administrator for his comments. The letter states that Johnson's remarks "aroused serious concerns" for two reasons. AFGE expressed its disappointment that Johnson "characterized the cancellation of CHEERS as an unfortunate result of public misunderstanding" and expressed concerns with the Administrator's remarks claiming that this study was "ethically and scientifically sound" when the basis of the study is to test absorption of pesticides when exposed to high levels. The EPA CHEERS program asserts that "You and your child will not experience any risks from participating in this study," which the AFGE refutes the claim due to the fundamental nature of the study.

"I applaud of the employees of EPA's Region 8 for speaking out," said U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) who successfully persuaded the EPA to cancel the CHEERS program during the nomination of Stephen Johnson to the post of EPA Administrator. "Unfortunately, it appears that Administrator Johnson's 'nomination conversion' was as hollow as it is short-lived. I will continue to actively oppose any policy that directly or indirectly encourages or utilizes unethical and intentional dosing of humans with pesticides."

"Mr. Johnson made a commitment to me, and I'm not going to let him renege on that commitment," said U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL).

"I am disappointed that the Bush Administration is defending testing pesticides on children as a scientifically and ethically sound practice. The truth is that scientists, health care providers, the

religious community and the U.S. House of Representatives strongly oppose using children to test pesticides. To claim the cancellation of the study was the 'unfortunate result of public misunderstanding' clearly shows how the Bush Administration values its relationship with the pesticide industry above the health and lives of America's children," said Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis, Ranking Member of House Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Materials.

Congressman Tim Bishop, who represents the 1st Congressional District of New York stated, "Testing pesticides on children is just plain wrong." He continued, "I am relieved that Congress is standing firm in opposition to exposing defenseless children to harmful chemicals," Bishop added. "America's children are not lab rats and are not for sale."

On May 19, 2005, Representatives Solis and Bishop attached an amendment to the recently passed Department of Interior appropriations bill for fiscal year '06 that restricts funding for testing pesticides on humans. The bill passed overwhelmingly and with bipartisan support. The Senate is expected to consider the EPA spending bill, later this summer.

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